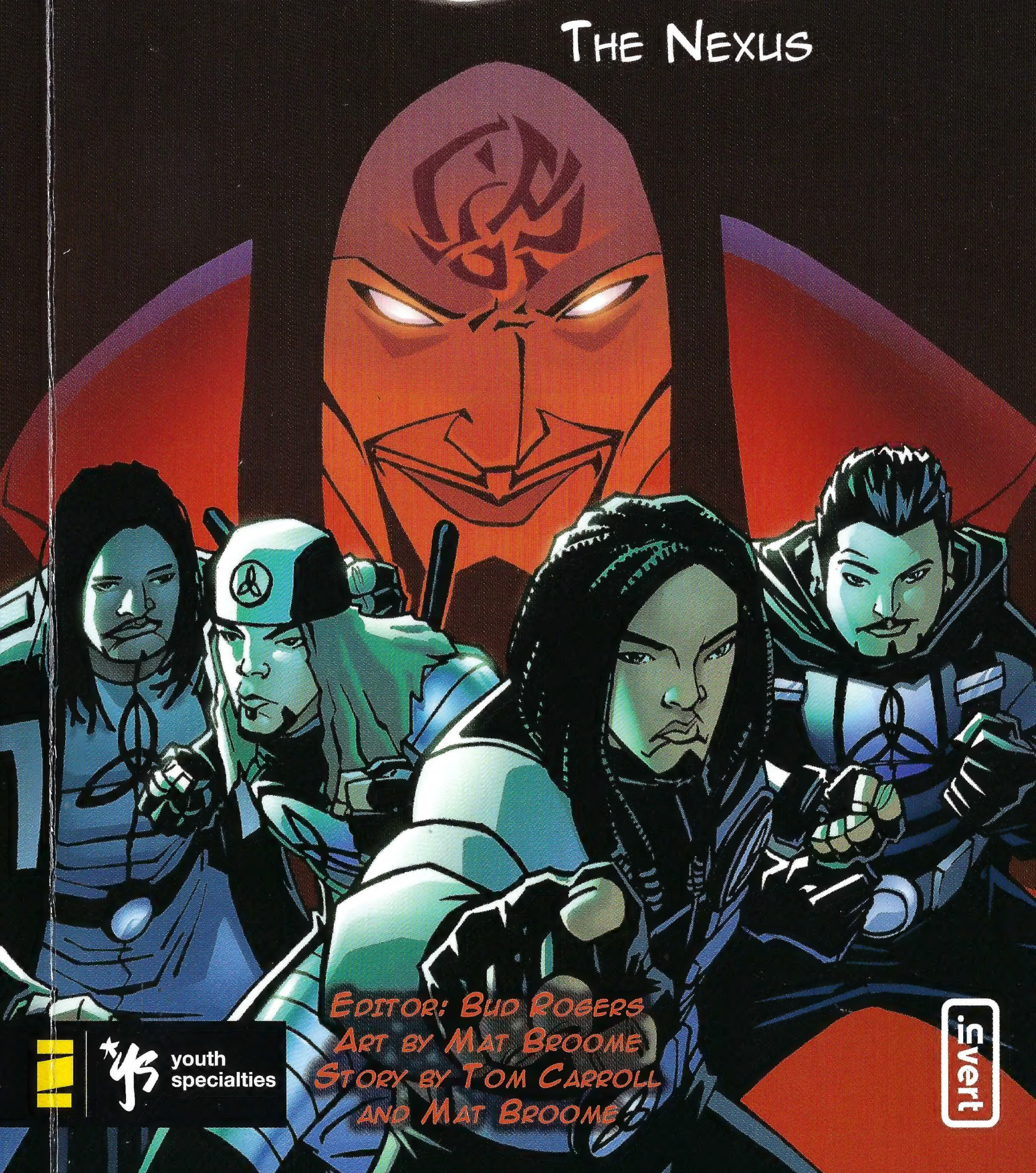
GRAPHIC NOVELS

P.O.D.

The Nexus



Editor: Bud Rogers
Art by Mat Broome
Story by Tom Carroll
and Mat Broome

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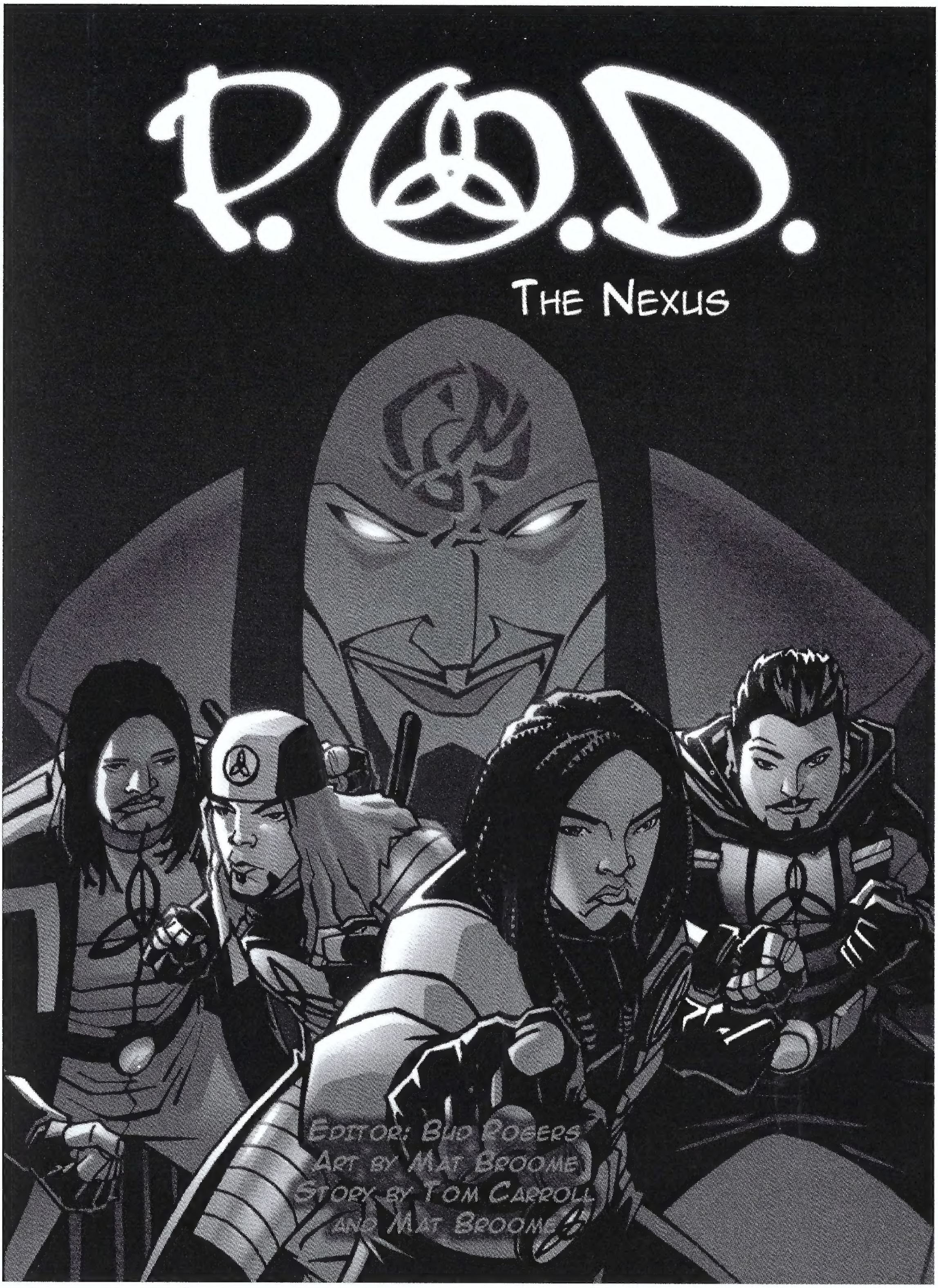

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11:56

AS THE NEW YEAR APPROACHES, P.O.D. IS BUSY DOING WHAT THEY DO BEST...

P.O.D.

...ROCKING THE HOUSE AT AN EXCLUSIVE MANHATTAN CLUB.

MARCOS' LEAD GUITAR WEAVES A SPELL OVER THE CROWD.

SONNY ON VOCALS; HIS VOICE IS AMAZINGLY COMPELLING.

WUV ON DRUMS; WHEN HE REALLY GETS GOING NO DRUMMER IS FASTER.

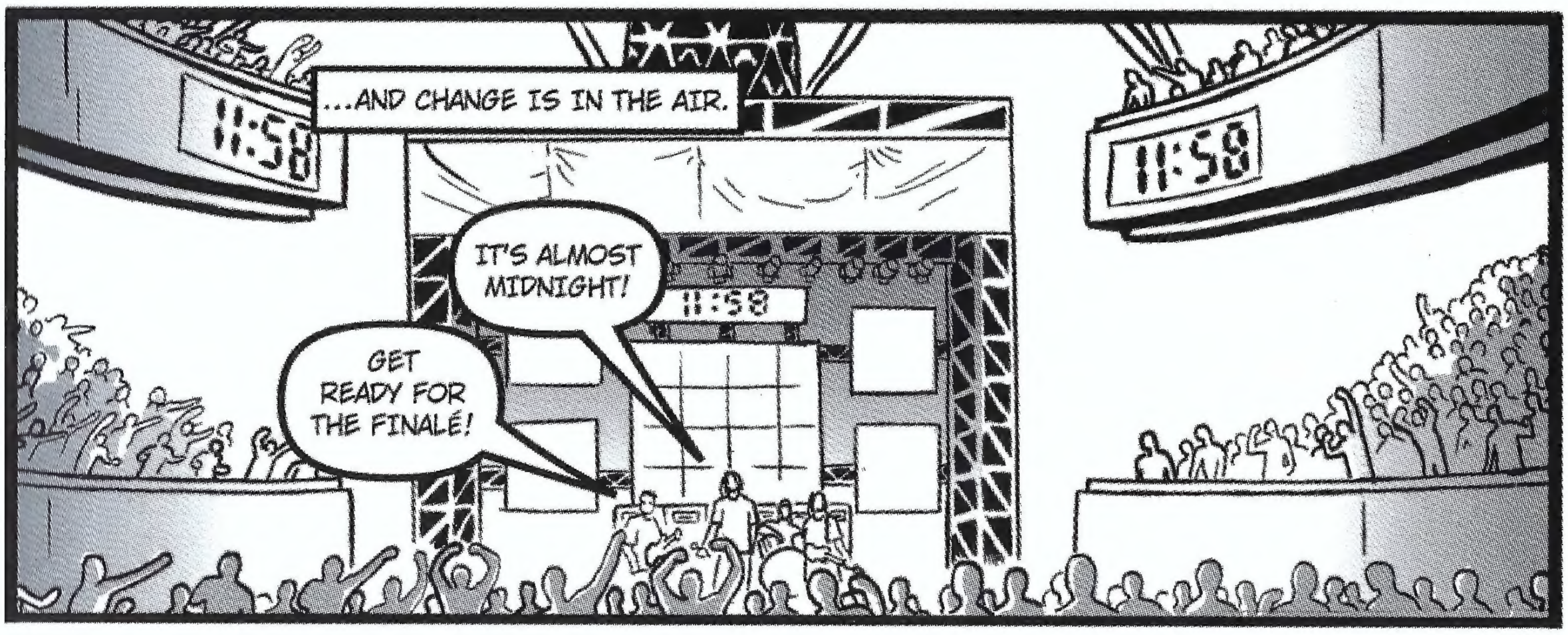
AND TRAA'S STRONG CHORDS ON BASS PROPEL THE MUSIC FORWARD.

BUT THIS ISN'T JUST ANY CLUB.

IT'S A VERY UNIQUE CLUB...

...PERCHED ON THE TOP FLOOR OF THE NEWLY COMPLETED FREEDOM TOWER, THE CROWN JEWEL IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF GROUND ZERO AT THE HEART OF NEW YORK CITY.

AND SO ON THIS SPECIAL NIGHT AND IN THIS SPECIAL PLACE, A CELEBRATION IS BEING THROWN FOR NEW BEGINNINGS...

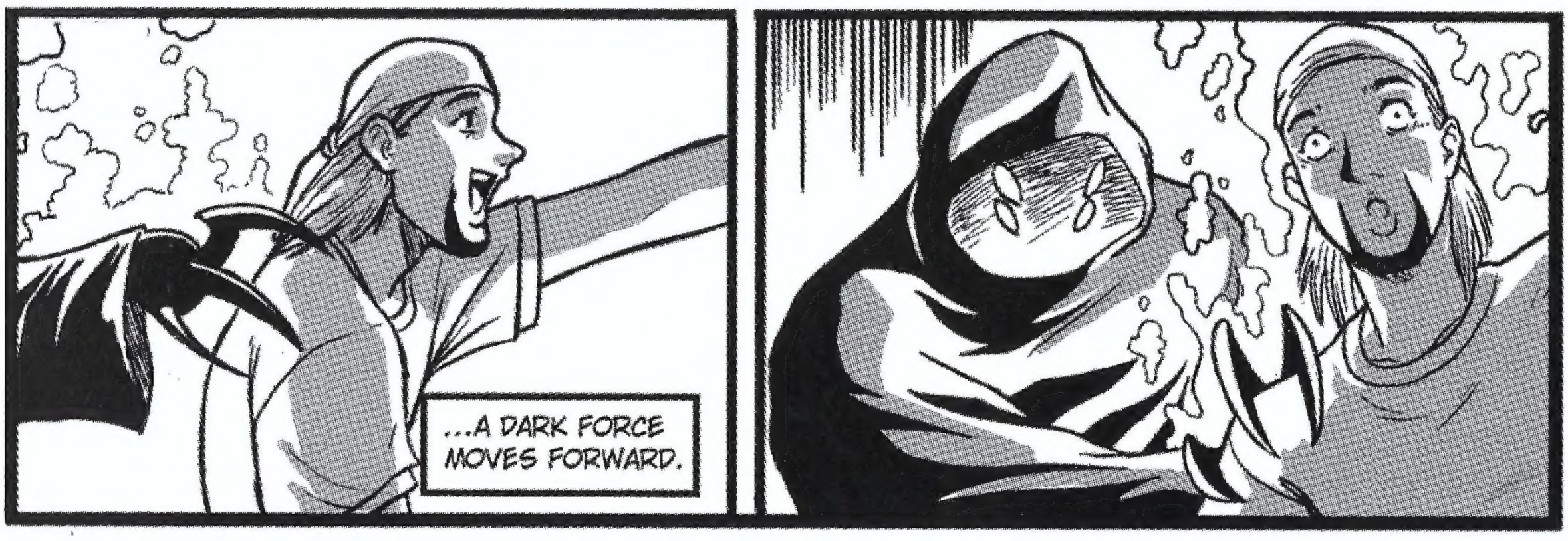

11:58
...AND CHANGE IS IN THE AIR.
IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT!
GET READY FOR THE FINALE!
11:58
11:58

NOT YET, BRO. LET THE MOMENT SOAK IN.

WHAT?

ARE THE FIREWORKS RUNNING EARLY?

BUT AS THE MUSIC BUILDS...


...A DARK FORCE MOVES FORWARD.

THE PRESENT

WEIRD...

EVIL PAUSES...

...AND REACHES FORWARD.

THE CHASE

11:59

12:00

WAIT!

WITH A FLASH OF LIGHT...

...THE NEW YEAR BEGINS...

...AND THE PARTY ROLLS ON.

THE DAY AFTER THEIR HOTTEST CONCERT GIG, AND IT'S TIME FOR P.O.D. TO KICK BACK AND RELAX, EACH IN THEIR OWN WAY.

FOR SONNY THAT MEANS A WELL DESERVED DAY OUTDOORS WITH THE FAMILY.

YO, KIDS ...ONE AT A TIME... OKAY, TWO!

FOR WUV, IT'S ALL ABOUT KICKIN' BACK WITH HIS PALS AT THE SKATE PARK.

THAT'S RIGHT, MAC. IT AIN'T BRAGGIN' IF YOU CAN DO IT.

MARCOS AND A BUDDY TORQUE DOWN BOLTS ON A BOSS 357.

PASS THE SOCKETS, BRO.

WHILE TRAA RELAXES AT THE LOCAL COFFEEHOUSE, REVIEWING DESIGNS FOR A NEW GUITAR, HE IS INTERRUPTED WITH --

WE HAVE BREAKING NEWS!!

HUH!?!

EYE WITNESS NEWS HAS NEW DETAILS ABOUT THE VICTIMS OF A MYSTERIOUS COMA-LIKE CONDITION THAT STRUCK SEVERAL ATTENDEES OF LAST NIGHT'S FREEDOM TOWER CONCERT.

DOCTORS ARE BAFFLED BY THE AILMENT.

PARTYGOERS ARE EQUALLY CONFUSED.

ONE MINUTE MY FRIEND WAS DANCING AND THE NEXT THING I KNOW SHE JUST GOES LIMP-- LIKE A RAG DOLL OR SOMETHING! I'M TERRIFIED JUST THINKING ABOUT IT!

THIS CONDITION IS LIKE NOTHING I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED.

ANYONE WITH ANY INFORMATION THAT MIGHT HELP IS ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT AUTHORITIES.

BEFORE TRAA CAN MAKE A MOVE TO HELP...

BREAKING NEWS!!!

NEWS BULLETINS ARE CRASHING IN HERE AT EYE WITNESS NEWS!!!

ALIENS HAVE LANDED!!!

IN GRINNELL, IOWA--

THEY JUST BURST THROUGH LIKE THEY WAS THERE ALL ALONG!

OUTSIDE OF WASHINGTON, DC--

THEY MOVE SO QUICKLY. NO ONE CAN STOP THEM!

THE LIST OF CITIES UNDER ATTACK GROWS BY THE MINUTE.

PARIS, BEIJING, AND MOSCOW ARE UNDER ATTACK AS WELL. OTHER WORLD CAPITALS ARE UNDER FULL ALERT.

WE NOW SWITCH TO PRESIDENT JONATHAN TRAXEL, ADDRESSING THE NATION FROM CAMP DAVID.

MY FELLOW AMERICANS ... A NEW BREED OF EVIL, ONE BEYOND OUR UNDERSTANDING, NOW HOLDS NEARLY EVERY CORNER OF OUR NATION, OUR WORLD, IN ITS GRIP. AS YOUR LEADER, I URGE YOU TO REMAIN CALM.

ONCE DEPLOYED, OUR FORCES WILL CRUSH THIS INVASION.

BARRING THAT, WE'LL PUSH THEM BACK FROM WHERE THEY CAME.

BUT TAKING MATTERS INTO YOUR OWN HANDS WILL ONLY ENDANGER THE LIVES OF THOSE AROUND YOU.

BONE CRUSHER

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN DANGER, MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE NEAREST CIVIL DEFENSE SHELTER ...

OH ... NO ...

AAARRGHH!

AGAIN, I REPEAT...

...REMAIN CALM--

WITHIN MOMENTS, TRAA'S TEAMMATES, SUITED UP AND READY FOR ACTION, CONVERGE ON THE COFFEEHOUSE.

THIS IS TRAA'S LAST KNOWN POSITION. EVEN IF HE USED HIS POWERS, WE'VE GOT TO FIND HIM.. BUT WE ALSO HAVE TO KEEP TRACK OF THE ALIENS.

I'M AFTER THEM, VOICE! THEY CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR!

AND I'LL FIND SHIELD!

?

YOU WON'T NEED TO FIND ME, MUSCLE! I'M OKAY. I HAD TIME TO MAKE AN ENERGY SHIELD BUBBLE. JUST POINT THE WAY TO THE ALIENS...

I'VE GOT A SCORE TO SETTLE!

TO FIND THE ALIENS... JUST FOLLOW THE DEBRIS, MAN...

AND I THINK YOU'LL FIND WE'VE ALL GOT SCORES TO SETTLE.

LET'S GO!

WHOA! THESE GUYS ARE TOUGH!

NOT TOO TOUGH TO SHOUT THROUGH!

THOUGH IT'S A LOT MORE FUN TO ORDER ONE TO SMASH ANOTHER!

THEN AGAIN, I'D MISS OUT ON A LOT OF FUN!

WISH I COULD GET SOMEONE ELSE TO DO MY WORK, VOICE.

WHY GET CAUGHT UP IN SINGLE COMBAT, GUYS ...

WHEN YOU CAN VORTEX A WHOLE BUNCH OF 'EM IN THE AIR AND LET GRAVITY TAKE OVER?

PROJECTING MY SHIELDS DOESN'T LET ME BE SUCH A CHATTERBOX AS YOU, RAGE.

BUT THE BEST DEFENSE CAN BE A DARNED GOOD OFFENSE. TAKE THAT, MONSTER!

YOU KNOW...

...WE'D DO A LOT BETTER...

...IF THERE WERENT...

...SO MANY BAD GUYS!

WHOA! I'M SURROUNDED!

LEND A HAND, RAGE!

I'D LIKE TO, BUT -- WHUFF!

I THINK THEY'RE LEARNING ABOUT US! COUNTERACTING OUR POWERS!

BUT HOW!?! AARGH!

ALL WE CAN DO IS TO KEEP FIGHTING!

KEEP -- UMPH!

MUSCLE'S DOWN!

IF YOU'RE LEARNING ABOUT OUR POWERS, THEN HERE'S A NEW LESSON!

NO! HE BRUSHED OFF THE HAMMER. NEED MORE SHIELD STRENGTH!

ACK!!!

WHAM!!!

NO ONE'S EVER HIT ME THAT HARD!

WAIT A MINUTE ...

WHAT'S THAT?

AGAIN?!?

THE CHOSEN

I'LL HOLD THESE THINGS OFF. WE NEED TO FALL BACK AND REGROUP.

YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHAT I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU...

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC, SHIELD FILLS HIS FRIENDS IN ON THE MESSAGE.

BUT IN LONDON...

...THEY FIND NO CHOSEN ONE.

JUST CHAOS AND DESTRUCTION.

ESCAPING TO PARIS, IT'S THE SAME STORY.

BY NOW, SHIELD, RAGE, AND VOICE ARE FEELING THE STRAIN..

ONLY MUSCLE'S STRENGTH ENDURES.

MY VORTEXES ARE WEAKENING, SHIELD.

TELL ME ABOUT IT. I'M RUNNIN' ON EMPTY MYSELF.

I'LL CUT US A PATH. WE NEED TO MOVE ON!

IN RUSSIA, THE STORY IS THE SAME.

PRICELESS TREASURES DESTROYED, RUINED BUILDINGS IN FLAMES...

...AND ARMIES SHREDDED LIKE SO MUCH PAPER.

POWERS EBBING, THE HEROES MUST MAKE THEIR STAND.

YOU CAN'T TAKE 'EM ON BY YOURSELF, MUSCLE.

BUT YOU MAY BE RIGHT. IF WE CAN'T BEAT THEM HERE, MAYBE WE CAN MAKE A FINAL STAND BACK IN THE STATES.

GRRR! BUT I FEEL LIKE I CAN, VOICE!

WASHINGTON, DC.

I FEEL SO HELPLESS...

YOU HEAR THAT?

YEAH... THEY CALLED US HEROES...

NO! LOOK UP THERE! THE HEROES RETURN!

WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO JUSTIFY THAT? WE HAVEN'T STOPPED--

WAIT! WE'LL SEE ONCE WE FIND THE CHOSEN. WE'LL SEE THEN.

MAYBE YOU'LL SEE THEN, MUSCLE. BUT TAKE A LOOK AT THAT.

NO... THAT CAN'T BE!!

IT'S PRESIDENT TRAXEL!!!

THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING!

OH, BUT IT CAN, YOU SO CALLED HEROES. YES, IT CAN.

AND I, FOR ONE, WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT.

... IS PILING UP FREQUENT FLIER MILES.

SO FAR, ALL YOU'VE BEEN GOOD AT ...

WHO ARE YOU!?!

SOMEONE WITH A LITTLE SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH YOU.

DON'T GET YOUR KNICKERS IN A TWIST.

HEY! WHAT'S HAPPENING DOWN THERE! LET'S STOP IT!

YOU'RE JUST LIKE THE JERKS I GREW UP WITH! THE ONES THAT DID NOTHING TO HELP!

HAH!!! DON'T BE SO QUICK TO TAKE OFFENSE, HOT HEAD ...

...YOU MAY FIND THAT RAGE COULD BE BEST USED ELSEWHERE!

KRUMMMG!!

FWOOOOSH!

[illegible]

HA HA HA!!!
KNEEL, YOU BUFFOONS.
HAVEN'T YOU EVER
BEEN IN THE PRESENCE
OF ROYALTY? HA HA
HA HA!!!

YOU THINK YOU'VE HAD IT ROUGH? WAIT 'TILL SHE ORGANIZES THAT RABBLE INTO AN ARMY!

I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO BEAT THEM, TOO.

WAIT...

HA HA HA HA!!!

NO. I ONLY SAID WE HAVE THINGS IN COMMON... LIKE FINDING THE CHOSEN.

WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND THE CHOSEN. WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

NOT MUCH...

...BUT APPARENTLY MUCH MORE THAN YOU!

THE CHOSEN HAS BEEN ON MY RADAR FOR A LONG TIME, BUT JUST WHEN I THINK I'M GETTING CLOSE... POOF!

LIKE SAND THROUGH MY FINGERS.

TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW!!!

EASY, MY FRIEND.

THE CHOSEN IS A NEXUS FOR LIMITLESS POWER. IT HAS BEEN ON EARTH FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS, SOMETIMES ACTIVELY WORKING FOR GOOD, SOMETIMES LYING LOW.

ITS ORIGINS ARE SHROUDED IN MYSTERY. AND NOBODY KNOWS ITS IDENTITY.

BUT WHAT I DO KNOW IS THAT ONLY THE PURE OF HEART CAN WORK IN CONCERT WITH THE CHOSEN.

HEH HEH... MAYBE THAT'S WHY I'VE HAD SO LITTLE LUCK...

I DO TRY TO BE GOOD, BUT IT'S OH SO DIFFICULT!

WE'LL NEVER FIND OUT ANYTHING TALKING TO THIS LOSER.

WHY DON'T WE SPLIT UP TO SEARCH?

YEAH... WE'LL COVER A LOT MORE GROUND.

THEN MEET BACK HERE WITH OUR FINDINGS.

SEARCH HIGH AND LOW, MY PUPPETS.

AH, THIS IS ALMOST TOO EASY.

SOMETIME LATER, HIGH ABOVE THE PLAINS...

YOU LOOK LIKE YOU COULD USE A HUG, SHIELD.

THIS ISN'T WORKING OUT THE WAY I WANTED IT TO.

YEAH... I NOTICED.

IF YOU HAD THE POWER OF THE CHOSEN YOU COULD MAGNIFY YOUR OWN POWERS, MAKE THE WORLD COMPLETELY SAFE FOR YOURSELF, FOR YOUR FAMILY... FOR EVERYONE.

THAT IS YOUR DREAM, ISN'T IT?

IF YOU SPLIT WITH THOSE OTHER BOZOS AND HELP ME FIND THE CHOSEN, WELL ... WE'D BE LIKE A REAL TEAM, EH? EQUAL PARTNERS.

LATER STILL, OVER THE MAJESTIC ROCKIES ...

NICE KATANAS YOU'VE GOT THERE, RAGE. BENIHANA'S GOT NOTHING ON YOU, DO THEY?

I'M IN NO MOOD...

FOR WHAT? FOR HONESTY?

THE POTENTIAL OF YOUR SPEED IS NEARLY UNTAPPED! HOW FAST COULD YOU GO? FAST ENOUGH TO OPEN A DIMENSIONAL PORTAL TO A HAPPIER PLACE?

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW BECAUSE YOU'RE AFRAID. THOSE LOSERS YOU'RE WITH ARE HOLDING YOU BACK.

I COULD HELP, BUT I'M A LITTLE BUSY WITH THIS QUEST FOR THE CHOSEN, Y'KNOW?

AND SHIELD'S THE ONE WITH ALL THOSE SECRET CLUES, ISN'T HE?

LET'S PRY THEM OUT OF HIM AND MOVE ON TO A COOL, NEW FUTURE... TOGETHER.

HIGH ABOVE THE MISSISSIPPI ON ST. LOUIS' FAMOUS GATEWAY ARCH...

AH! I LOVE THE SMELL OF FERMENTING HOPS IN THE AFTERNOON. IT'S THE SMELL OF VICTORY!

TAKE A HIKE, JERK.

TESTY, AREN'T WE?

BUT WITH THAT COMMANDING VOICE OF YOURS YOU COULD BE A PRETTY POWERFUL DUDE IF YOU'D JUST LIGHTEN UP! YOU'D BE IRRESISTIBLE, LACK FOR NOTHING!

MAYBE YOU COULD EVEN GET BACK ON TRACK WITH YOUR DAD... THE ONE YOU'VE HAVEN'T SPOKEN TO IN, WHAT... HAS IT BEEN FIVE YEARS ALREADY?

BUT WHAT'S A FATHER'S LOVE COMPARED TO HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR BUDS, AND THAT SHIELD, IN PARTICULAR.

SHIELD WHO SEEMS TO HAVE A MONOPOLY ON THE CHOSEN.

HOW RIGHT IS THAT, EH? NOW WHO SEEMS LIKE A JERK?

SUNSET AT THE TOP OF THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE ...

I ALWAYS FIGURED YOU FOR A WEST COAST GUY. MUSCLE-RONI, THE SAN FRANCISCO TREAT!

I HAVE NO TIME FOR YOU.

TIME ...ISN'T THAT WHAT WE'VE ALL GOT, PAL?

WEREN'T YOU THE PUNY KID WHO ENDURED THE TAUNTS OF YOUR COMPADRES ... TIME AFTER TIME?

YOU HIT THE GYM, BUT YOU NEVER HIT BACK AT ANYONE.

IF YOU FOUND THE CHOSEN, YOU'D HAVE THE POWER TO BE IMMORTAL ... TO STAND LIKE A COLOSSUS, SMASHING LESSER MORTALS LIKE A BOOT CRUSHES INSECTS.

SOUNDS APPEALING, DOESN'T IT?

BUT IT CAN ONLY HAPPEN IF YOU TAKE ON SHIELD AND MAKE HIM--

ENOUGH!!! I'M NOT LISTENING TO ANY MORE OUT OF YOU!!!

WHAT? HE VANISHED...

BUT I THINK I KNOW WHAT HE'S TRYING TO DO... AND THAT MEANS I NEED TO GET TO SHIELD FIRST!!!

WHAT IS THAT... FACE?

IT MUST BE THE FACE OF THE CHOSEN... BUT HOW?

HOW WILL I EVER FIND YOU!?! I AM NOT WORTHY...

AAAAAIGH!!!

NO! NOT NOW!!!

TRAITOR!

YOU WANT THE CHOSEN ALL TO YOURSELF!

NOT SO FAST!

OOF!!

AND SO IT BEGINS ...

RAGE AND I TRUSTED YOU TWO!

...FAITH, LIAR!

TRUST IS...

...NOTHING WITHOUT...

WE'VE GOT TO STICK TOGETHER!

SO IF I HAVE TO TAKE YOU OUT TO GET TO THE CHOSEN, THAT'S HOW IT GOES!

VOICE! DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT THESE TROUBLES BEGAN WHEN THAT CRAZY GUY SHOWED UP?

HE'S NOT THE ONE WHO SEES VISIONS OF THE CHOSEN. YOU ARE!

THIS ISN'T ABOUT THE CHOSEN, VOICE. IT'S ABOUT US!

FACE IT, ON OUR OWN WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO DEFEAT THE ALIENS.

I'LL SHOW YOU POWER!

MORE THAN YOU'VE EVER FELT BEFORE!

AARGH!!

YOU MAY HAVE THOUGHT YOU WERE DOING ALL THE HEAVY LIFTING, MUSCLE, BUT YOU WERE WRONG!

LISTEN TO YOURSELF! THAT'S NOT THE RAGE I KNOW. YOU'RE CONSUMED...

...CONSUMED BY JEALOUSLY!

I AM NOT...

ENOUGH!!!

HOW DID YOU DO THAT!?

YOUR SHIELDS HAVE ONLY EVER BEEN DEFENSIVE...

...BUT YOU JUST ZAPPED ME LIKE I WAS A FLY!

BUT IT'S NOT GOING TO MATTER ONCE I'M DONE WITH YOU!

HOLD ON! DON'T YOU SEE? WE STOPPED TRUSTING EACH OTHER WHEN WE MET THAT CRAZY GUY!

SHIELD'S RIGHT! BUT IF YOUR HEAD'S TOO HARD TO HEAR...

...THEN THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO GET THROUGH!

NOW THAT I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION, WE'VE GONE THROUGH SOME ROUGH TIMES LATELY... BUT NONE OF US IS SO TOUGH THAT WE CAN'T FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS MESS... TOGETHER!

OH... MY...

WHAAA!?!

IS IT THAT DUDE?

NO...

IT'S NOT THE DUDE, MAN.

CHECK IT OUT.

WHOA!

IT'S THE FREEDOM TOWER!
BUT WHAT ABOUT IT?
LOOK NOW... THAT FACE.
IT'S THE CHOSEN!
THE CHOSEN MUST BE BACK IN MANHATTAN.
HOW'D WE GET SO SIDETRACKED?
THAT DUDE.
DOESN'T MATTER. IT'S NOT TOO LATE, IF WE TAKE ACTION NOW!

LOOK, THERE HE IS!

HE MUST BE IN MANHATTAN TOO!

AND HE MUST KNOW THAT THE CHOSEN IS THERE TOO!

HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE, GUYS...

...THE ALIENS ARE SWARMING ALL OVER THE STREETS...

...HEADING RIGHT TO THE FREEDOM TOWER!

LET'S ROLL!!!

AT MAXIMUM POWER WE CAN BE BACK IN THE CITY WITHIN A COUPLE HOURS.

WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON THAT DUDE--

YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO STAND IN LINE, MAN.

IT'LL TAKE ALL OUR POWERS TO FIND THE GIRL... THE CHOSEN.

AND I CAN'T HELP THINKING WE MAY ALREADY BE TOO LATE!

A FAMILIAR FIGURE IS INDEED ALREADY THERE...

...ASKING QUESTIONS...

...GENTLY PROBING...

GEE... I DUNNO...

...DEMANDING ANSWERS.

COME ON! SHE'S ABOUT FIVE FEET TALL, DARK HAIR--

THAT COULD BE ANYONE!

S247

IDIOTS!!!

BUT NEARBY...

...A PAIR OF EYES LOOKS ON...

...STAYING JUST OUTSIDE THE LINE OF VISION.

THERE'S SOMETHING HERE... I CAN'T QUITE GET IT.

AH-HA!

!!!

I SEE YOU NOW, MY PRETTY LITTLE THING.

RUN IF YOU WANT. YOU WON'T GET AWAY!

SHE'S FAST! THESE CLOTHES AREN'T HELPING...

I DON'T CARE WHO SEES MY TRUE FORM!

DUDE, WHERE DID YOU GET THAT COAT?

EEK!

IT'S TIME TO END THIS CHARADE!

OUT OF THE WAY, CRETINS! YOU'RE IN MY WAY!

I'VE GOT A HOT DATE!

YOU'RE MINE NOW!

ALIENS! WHY NOW?!?

WHAT!?!

YOU DARE--
LAY HANDS UPON ME!?!
I DON'T THINK SO!

HAH! THE FREEDOM TOWER.

HOW IRONIC.

FREEDOM IS THE LAST THING YOU'LL FIND HERE, MY DEAR!

BECAUSE... YOU... WILL... BE... MINE!!!

THIS GIRL TRIES MY PATIENCE.

BUT EVEN THE FASTEST EXPRESS ELEVATOR...

...WON'T PROVIDE ANY ESCAPE FROM YOUR FATE.

HOW SAD. THE ULTIMATE POWER IN THE UNIVERSE WRAPPED IN A STEEL-JACKETED GIFT BOX.

AND NOW IT'S ALL MINE.

...OUT?!?

WHAT? WHERE?!?

SHE WAS NEVER EVEN IN THE ELEVATOR! NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY...

ALL RIGHT. LET'S NOT BE SHY. COME ON...

OOH, THAT MINX...

NO FAIR TAKING THE STAIRS!

!!!

BUT HEY...

I UNDERSTAND HOW A GIRL LIKES TO GET IN HER AEROBICS!

?

AW, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU STARTED WITHOUT US!

HOW!?!

BUT WE'LL HELP FINISH THINGS UP!

HAH! YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO WANT A PIECE OF ME!

EGEO JAX JIL GAG ROFL

LET'S FINISH THIS CLOWN FIRST, THEN TAKE CARE OF THE ALIENS.

THEY DON'T MOVE TOO FAST.

YOU WON'T WANT TO WAIT. ONCE THOSE ALIENS GET A LEG UP, THEY'RE UNSTOPPABLE.

!!!

WHATEVER.

YEAH ... YOU'RE ONLY POSTPONING YOUR DATE WITH DESTINY.

...

SPEAKING OF DESTINY, MY DEAR...

WHAT??!

CRUNCH

I TOLD YOU DOLTS BEFORE...

AWESOME!

...DON'T MESS WITH ME!!!

OH... IT'S YOU.

THIS FEELS GREAT!

S-SOUL SHREDDER ...SSSTAND BACK! THISSS GIRL **PIK** IS OURS- S-S

S-SHE WILL OPEN A PORTAL FROM OUR GALAXY TO THIS WORLD. A NEXUS FOR OUR CONQUESSSST.

SHE **POK** REP-P- PRESENTSSS AN ANCIENT POWER S-S-SOURCE.

YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE THE CHOSEN, QUEENIE...

...CAT SEEMS TO HAVE HER TONGUE.

JOIN USSS, S-SOUL SHREDDER... THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU AT MY RIGHT.

WE WILL GIVE YOU THESE FOUR CREATURES TO SSSSERVE YOU...

...ONCE THEY ARE CONQUERED.

GENEROUS OFFER, QUEENIE, AND YOU KNOW HOW I LIKE VASSALS...

...BUT I'VE GOT MY OWN PLANS FOR THE POWER OF THE CHOSEN!!!

THE GIRL'S BREAKING AWAY!

RIGHT! LET'S MOVE THAT WAY, SO WE CAN ...

SHIELD! WATCH OUT!!!

THEY SCRAGGED SHIELD! TAKE 'EM OUT NOW!!!

AAAAAGH!

WAIT... THE GIRL'S THE ANSWER!

SHE'S THE KEY TO EVERYTHING...

...AND I WON'T LET ANY ALIEN CREEP...

...GET TO HER FIRST!

THE CHOSEN OPENS HER MOUTH AND FINDS HER VOICE.

Y-YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD POWER.

NOW IS THE TIME.

YOU'VE GOT TO LET IT FLOW!

AND AT THAT MOMENT, THE HEROES FALL IN WITH THEIR INSTRUMENTS.

AT FIRST SLOWLY, HALTINGLY, SHE BEGINS TO SING.

AND THE HEROES REINFORCE HER SONG, HELPING IT BUILD.

GIVING IT STRUCTURE AND FORM.

AND GIVING A TIMID GIRL WHO HAD LIVED HER LIFE IN THE SHADOWS THE CONFIDENCE TO STEP OUT IN SONG AND POWER.

KEEP PLAYING! BEING PURE IS IMPORTANT TO THE CHOSEN, BUT IT'S MORE THAN THAT! IT'S A SPIRIT THAT LIVES IN US ALL.

THAT SPIRIT IS WAKING UP WITHIN HER.

FLOWING THROUGH HER.

NOOOOO!!!

IT'S WORKING, MUSCLE! BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH.

...

PURITY... ESSENCE...

A POWER BORN...

...OF ONE...

...PURE...

...TONE!

THE ALIEN WARRIORS ARE SWEPT AWAY LIKE SO MUCH CHAFF.

THE OTHER THREATS, HOWEVER, ARE MORE TENACIOUS.

IT WILL NOT END LIKE THIS!

BUT THE POWER OF THE CHOSEN, AWAKENED BY A PURE HEART...

WILL NOT BE DENIED!!!

THE ALIEN QUEEN, CAUGHT IN HER FIRST WASH OF DEFEAT, LASHES OUT AT THE ONLY CREATURE SHE CAN REACH...

NOOOO!!

WE WOULD HAVE MADE SUCH BEAUTIFUL MUSIC TOGETHER!

BAM

BAM

BAM

BAM

WITH HER RIVAL OUT OF THE WAY...

...THE ALIEN QUEEN TURNS HER FULL MIGHT ONTO THE CHOSEN...

...AND ATTEMPTS TO GRAB ETERNITY.

NO YOU DON'T!!!

NOW'S THE TIME...

...TAKE HER DOWN!!!

AND IN LESS THAN AN INSTANT...

ETERNITY REACHES OUT.

AND WITH THE DEATH OF THE QUEEN, THE THREAT IS OVER.

AND THE RESULTS ARE IMMEDIATE...

WHOA! DID I MISS EVERYTHING?

STEADY, BIG GUY! WE'LL GET YOU UP TO SPEED.

AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DAYS...

...PEOPLE, NOT JUST IN NEW YORK, BUT ALL AROUND THE WORLD...

...RAISE THEIR FACES TO THE SKY AND SMILE.

EVERYWHERE THE HEROES WENT THEY SAW THE SAME MESSAGES OF HOPE: UPLIFTING RENEWAL, STRENGTH THROUGH TOGETHERNESS, AND A SWEEPING BOND OF TRUST.

WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN TO THE CHOSEN?

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ANY OF US? NEW CHALLENGES, NEW ADVENTURES--

OR MAYBE JUST THE CHANCE TO GET BACK...

...TO THE WAY THINGS WERE!

DAWN BREAKS OVER THE FREEDOM TOWER.

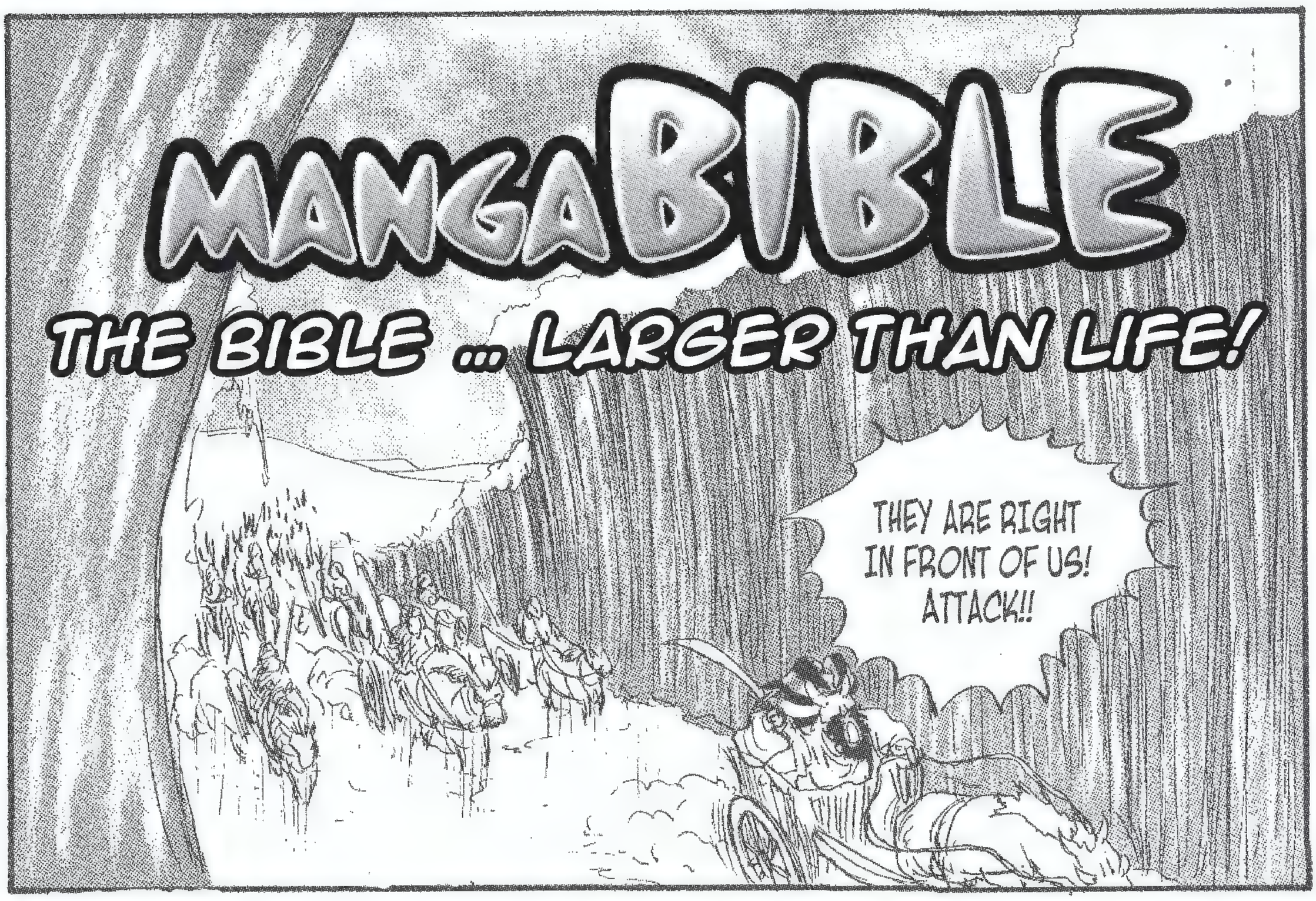
NEW BEGINNINGS OPEN UP FOR HER.

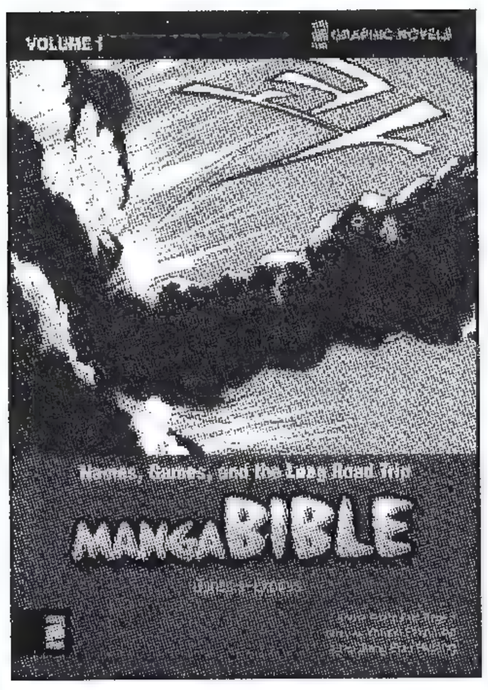
NOT KNOWING OF THE POSSIBILITIES THAT ABOUND... NOT EVEN KNOWING WHO HE IS.

AND IN THE STREET BELOW, THE SUNRISE STRIKES THE WONDROUS EYES OF A YOUNG WOMAN WHO NOW REALIZES THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN LIVING IN THE SHADOWS.

MEANWHILE, A FAMILIAR FACE TURNS UNSEEING EYES DOWNWARD.

END





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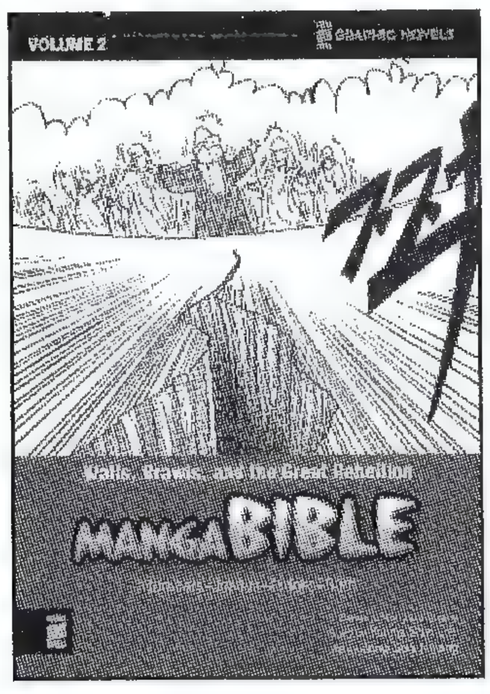

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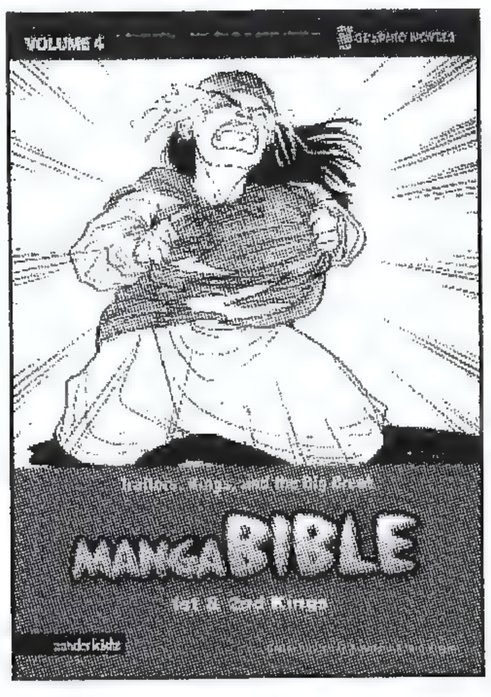

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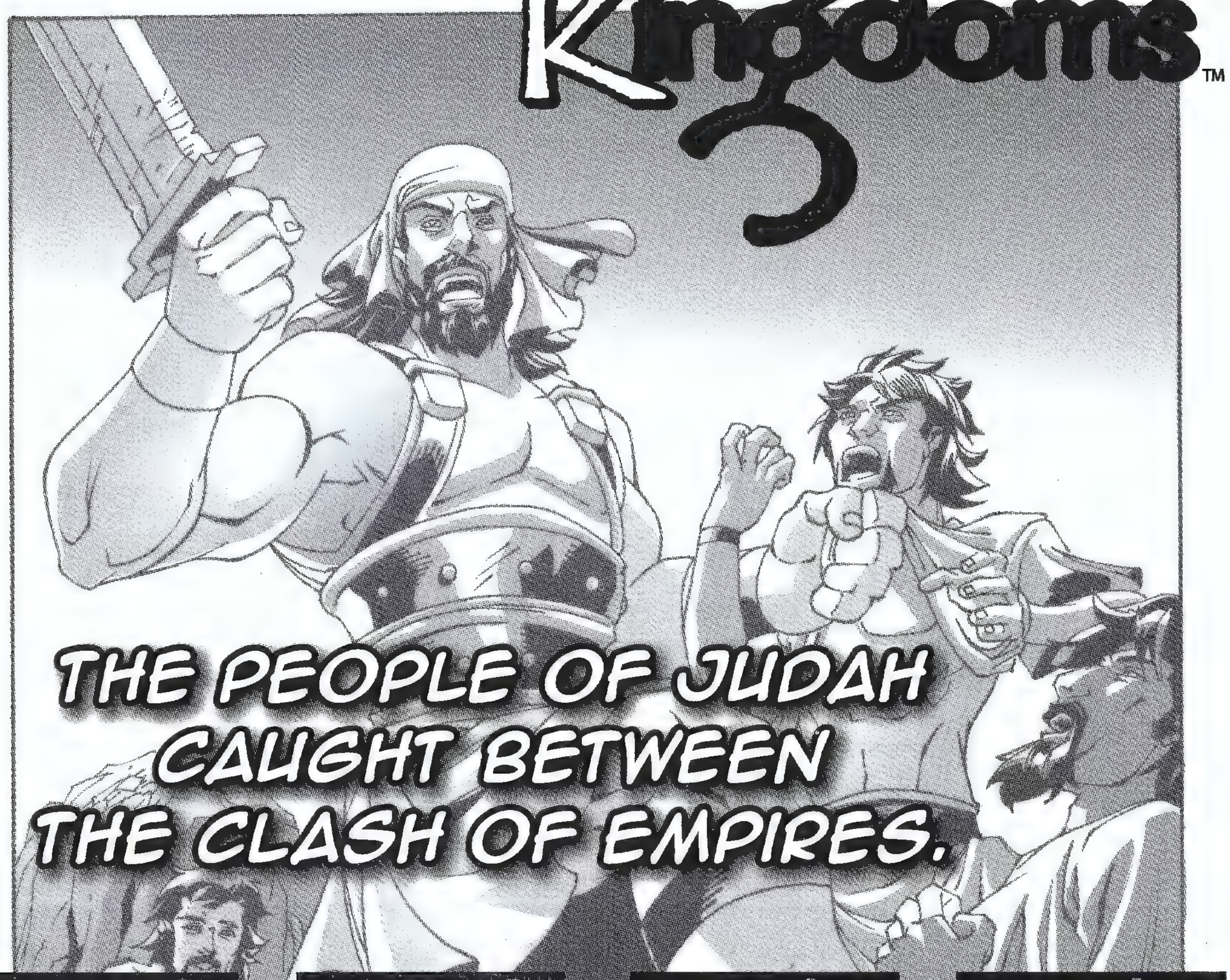

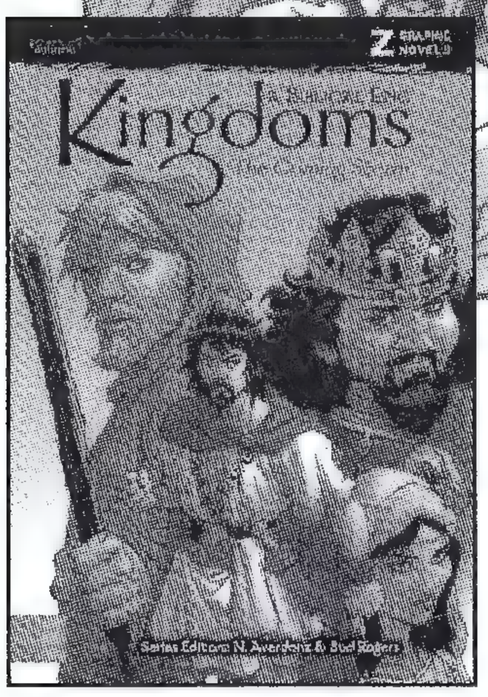

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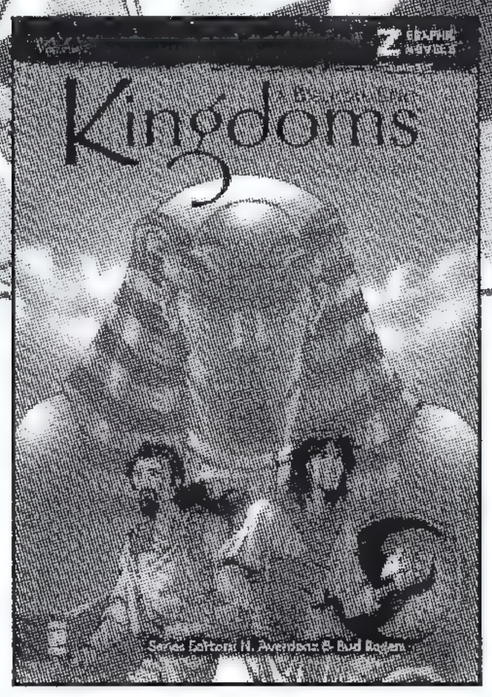

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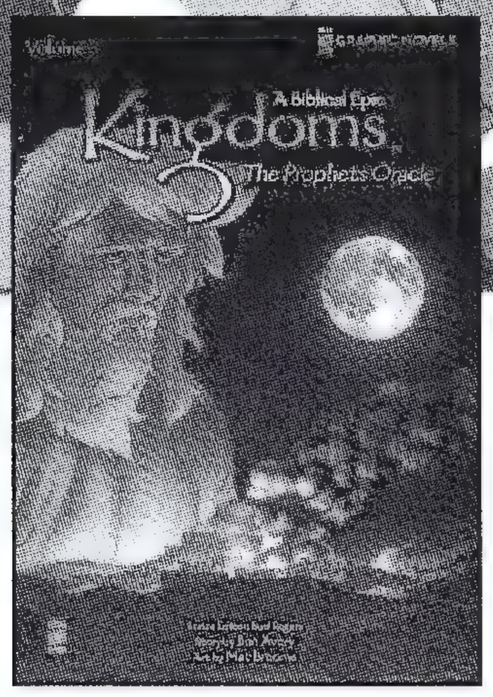

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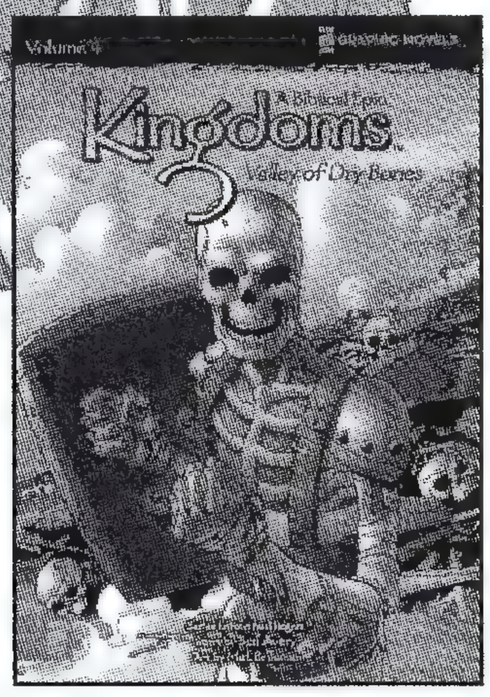

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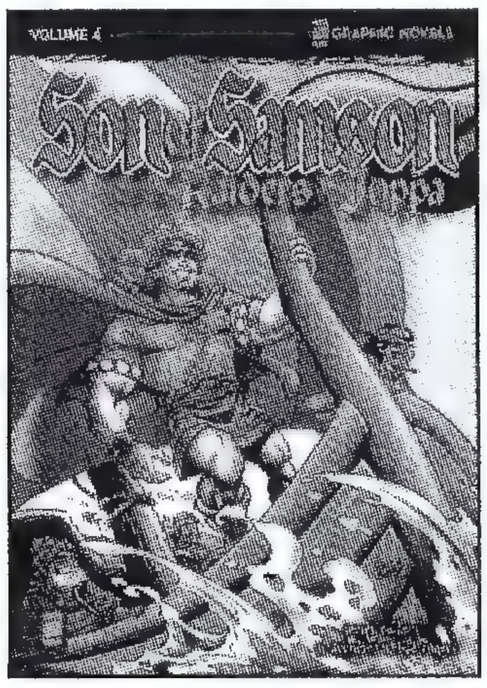

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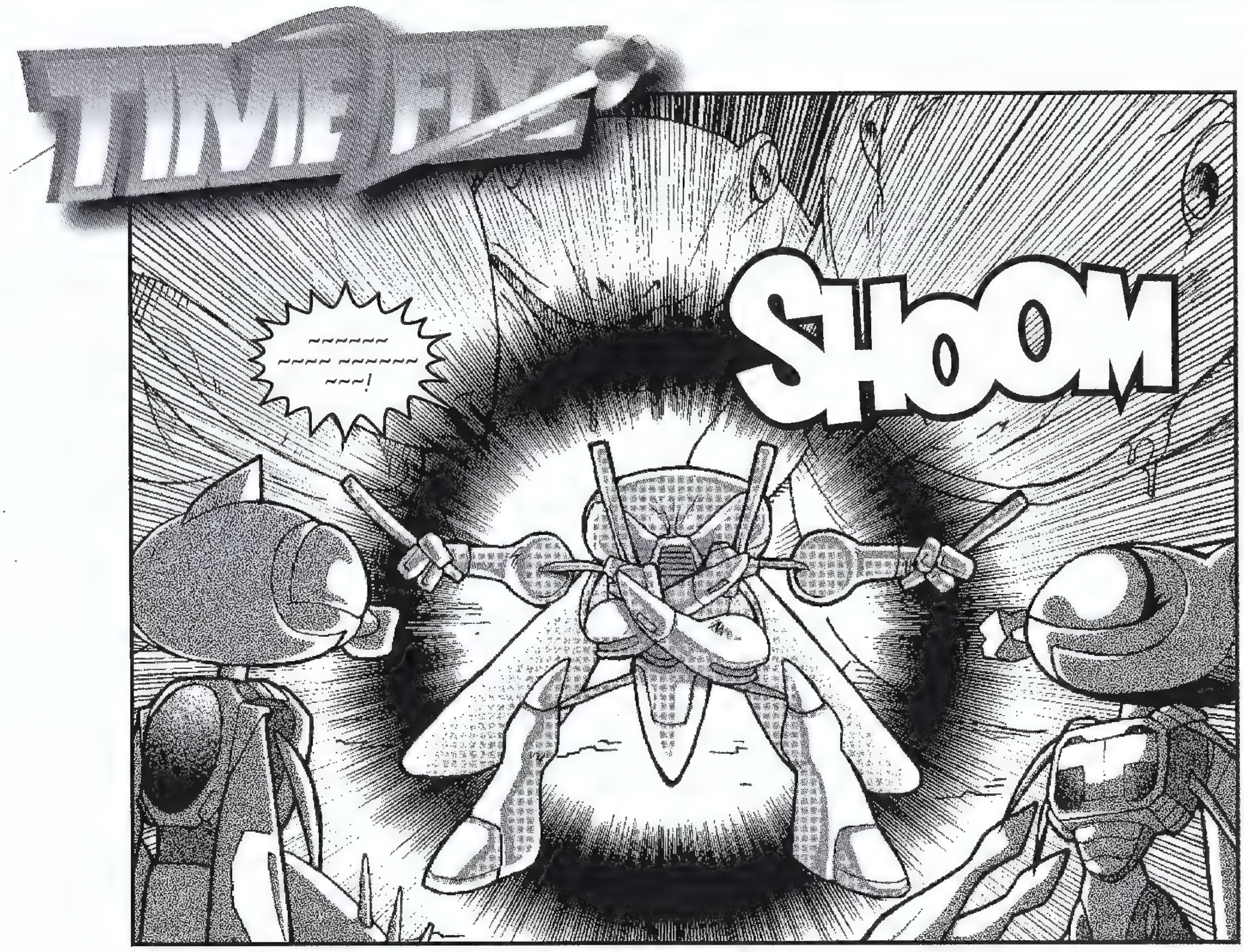

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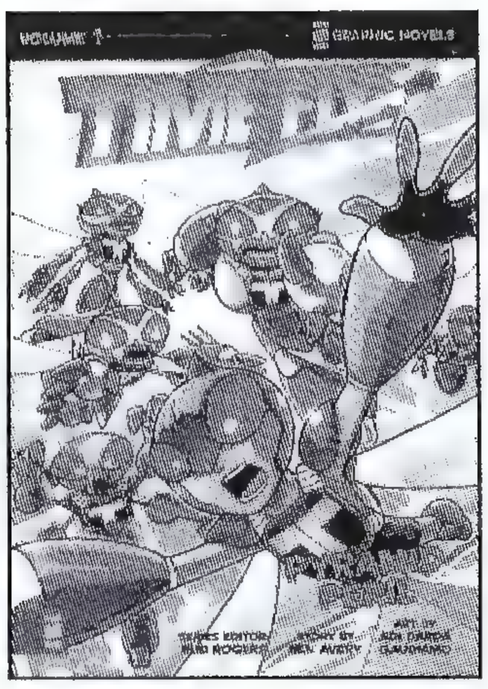

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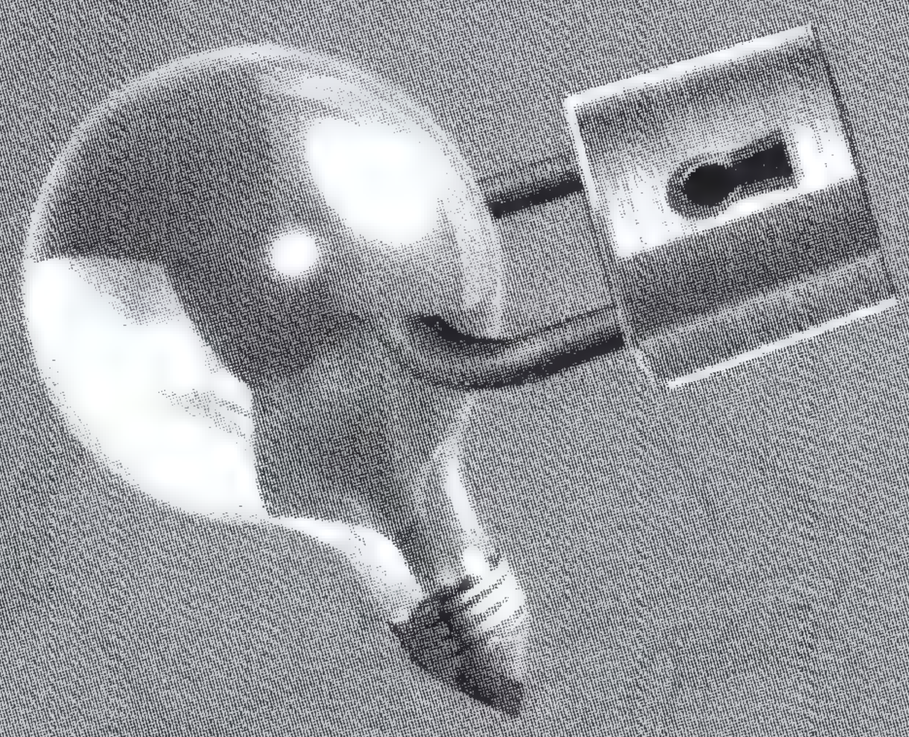

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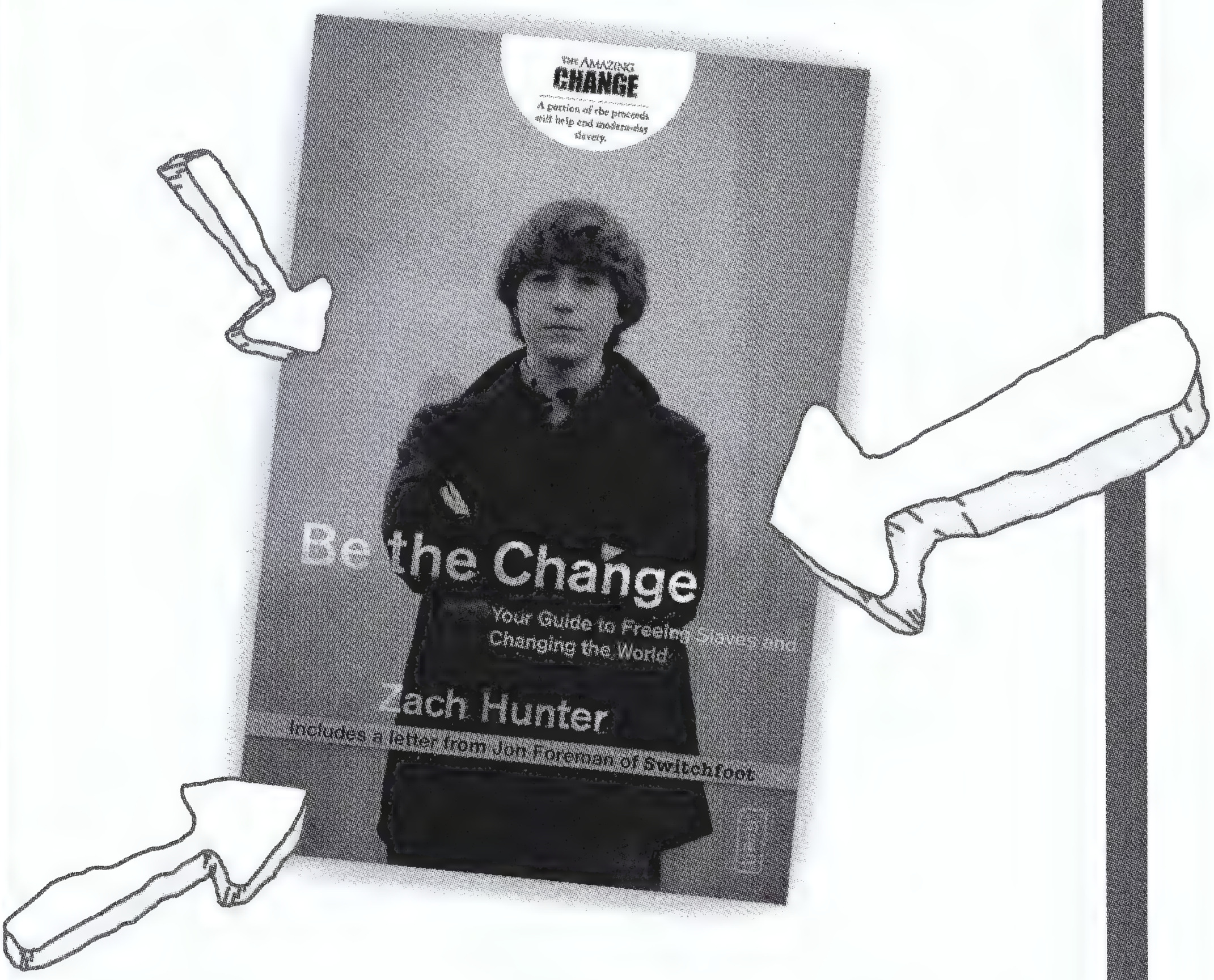

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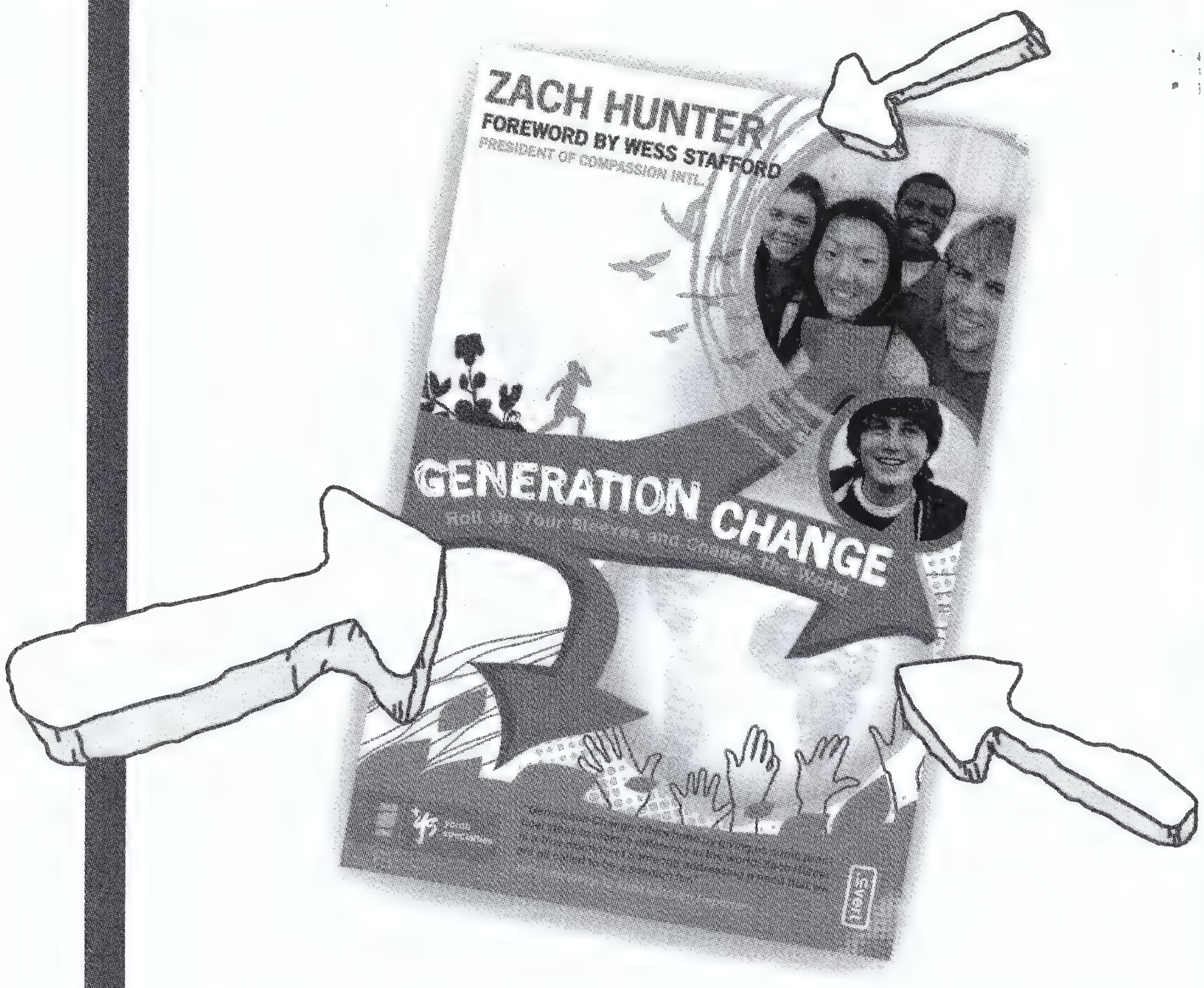

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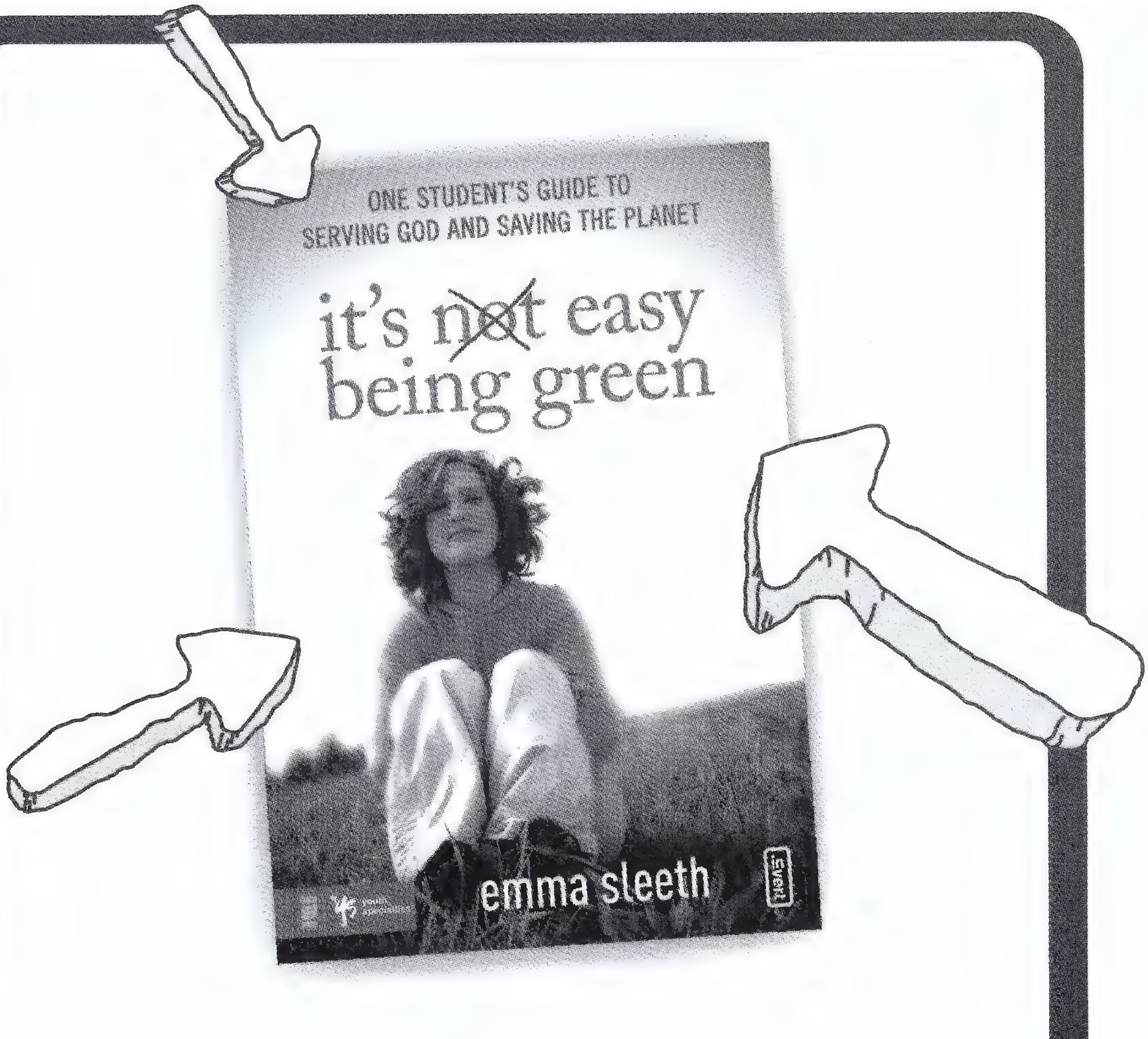

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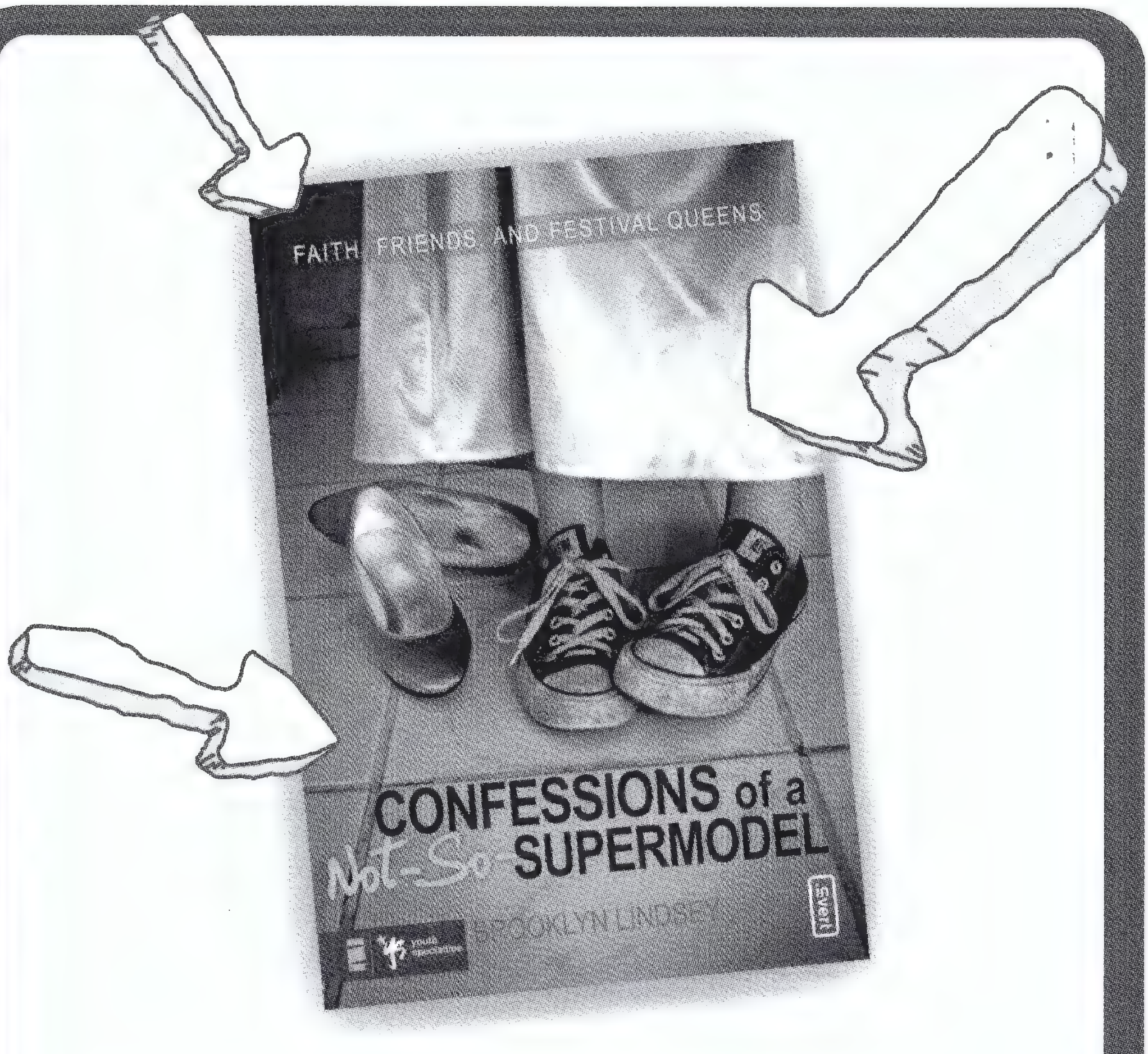

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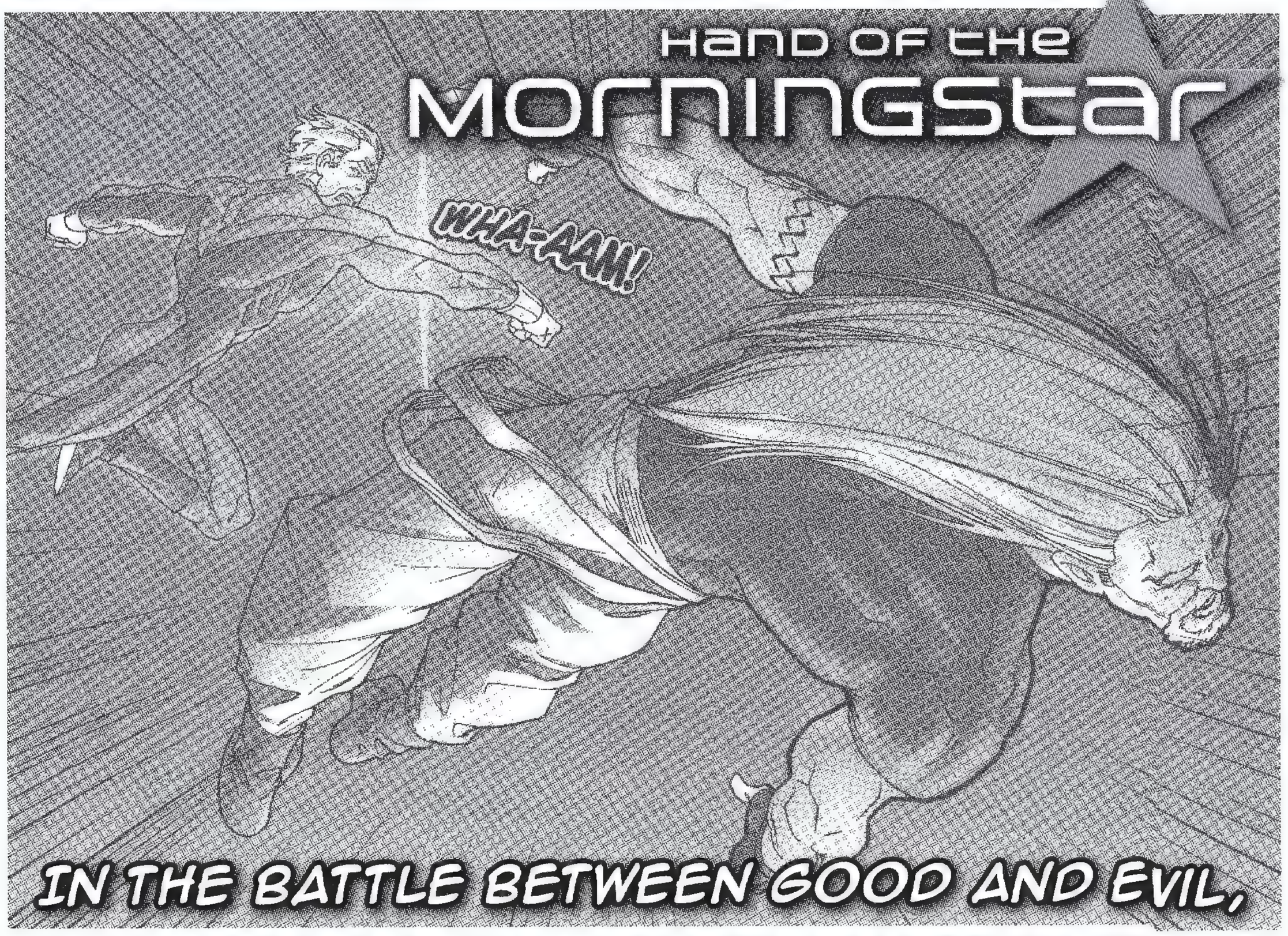

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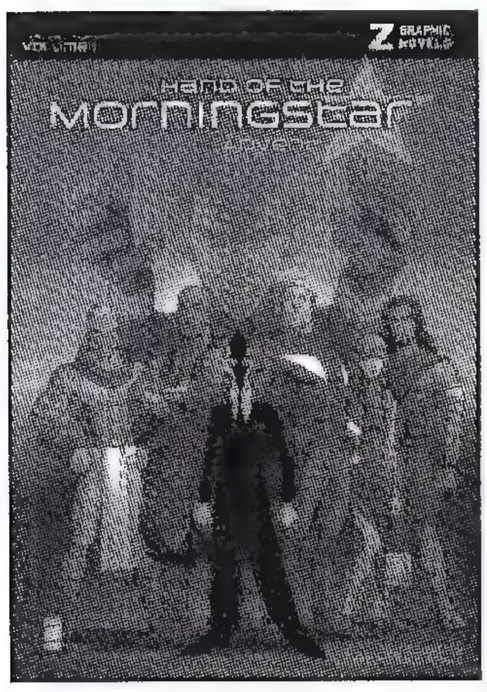

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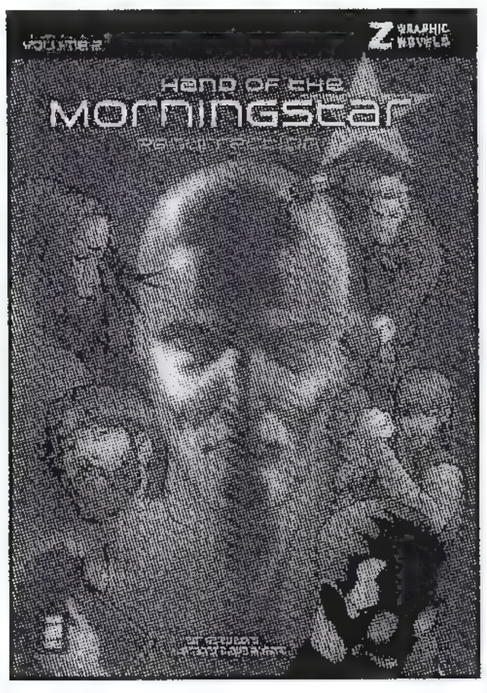

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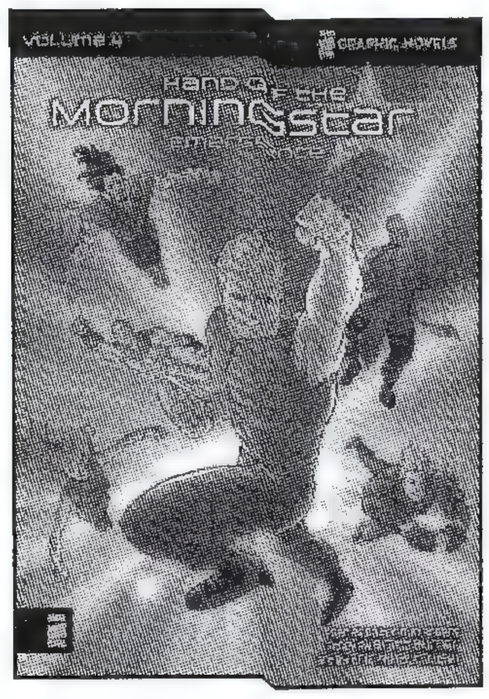

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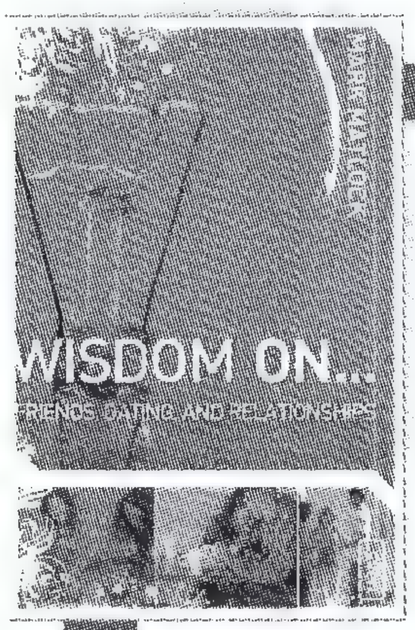

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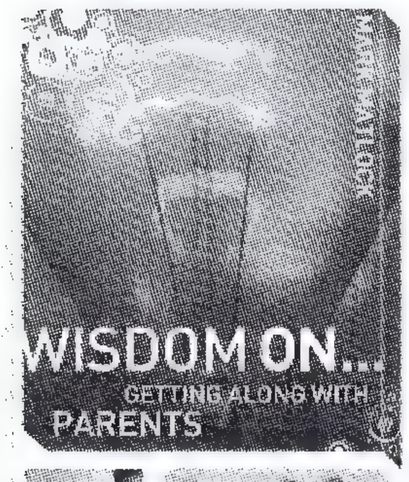

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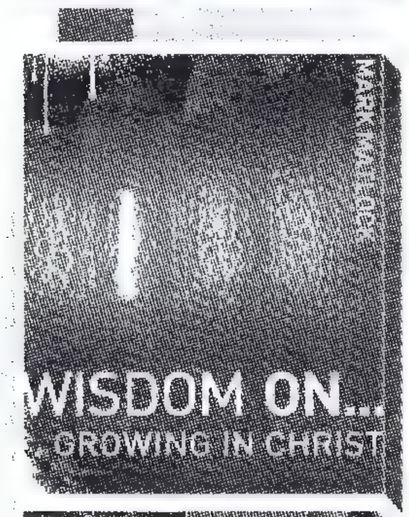

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